

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 19th January, 2016

Present:- Councillor Watson (in the Chair); Councillors Hamilton, Ahmed and Currie.

Officers in attendance: - A. Jessop, M. Whiting, L. Dale, A. Harvey, S. Wilson, C. Hall, C. Bailey, J. Parfremment, A. Muxlow, H. Etheridge.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Vines, Superintendent P. McCurry, K. Holgate, P. Davies, R. Wall, J. Hopkinson, L. Grice-Saddington.

it was noted that Phil Davies had resigned from the panel due to other work commitments. Superintendent McCurry was shortly to leave his post and would be replaced by Superintendent S. Green.

VOICE AND INFLUENCE THEMED MEETING: -

D29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

D30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD IN NOVEMBER, 2015, AND MATTERS ARISING.

The minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 10th November, 2015, were considered.

Some matters arising updates were provided: -

Under D21 – Communications – it was reported that the Foster Carer celebration diner had taken place on 27th November, 2015, and had been a really positive event and a good atmosphere. Many positive comments were received.

Under D22 – Foster Service Annual Report – it was reported that the foster carer recruitment drive was launched. Monthly enquiries were being monitored and contacts in December were showing a substantial increase compared to the same point in the previous three years. This trend was very encouraging.

Under D24 – Support to Rotherham Care Leavers – there was progress to report that a residential hub had been identified that met the needs of the Leaving Care Hub. A capital bid had been submitted to conduct the necessary material upgrades.

Leaving care housing was also considered as part of the Council's developing draft Housing Strategy. The draft Strategy was undergoing consultation and was being presented to a wide range of stakeholders. Elected Members would receive a detailed presentation on the intended

Housing Policy and the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were urged to consider how well the Strategy met the needs of Looked After Children who were leaving care and getting their first independent home. Constructive feedback from the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel should be fed back.

Councillor Currie explained that he thought it was important for the housing lived in by care leavers to be in an appropriate area. He also felt it was unacceptable for their leaving care payment to be used towards a housing deposit.

Under D25 – Missing Children and Young People – it was confirmed that the Improving Lives Select Commission had considered the issues relating to missing children and young people, and that they would continue to keep this as part of their work programme. This issue was considered in conjunction with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Councillor Hamilton asked about processes for reporting children who went missing from education. It was noted that there were trigger points dependent on the number of sessions missed and lifetime attendance monitoring also took place.

Under D27 – Residential Homes Issues – Councillor Watson explained how some Elected Member visits had taken place and that details of the visits had been emailed to the Elected Members who had signed up. Recent visits to residential homes had resulted in the weekly progress plan being updated and improved, and altered Regulation 44 Visits. Members of the Council's Senior Leadership Team had visited and conducted a mini-audit.

Councillor Hoddinott had attended a residential home visit and had reported that she had met many passionate staff but that it was clear and evident which were permanent staff and which were agency workers. There was clear challenge to the staff to improve their practice and this was reassuring. There were some issues to be picked up in respect of record keeping. Overall there was evident love and warmth for the children and young people living there.

Resolved: - (1) That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 10th November, 2015, be agreed as an accurate record.

(2) That the matters arising updates provided be noted.

D31. COMMUNICATIONS.

The following communication updates were provided for the Corporate Parenting Panel: -

Under Minute number D22, Fostering Service Annual Report, from the

previous meeting held an update on **fostering recruitment timescales** had been requested. A briefing paper had been circulated to the Corporate Parenting Panel members that showed that the fostering timescales were competitive.

The following **LAC Champion** appointments were confirmed: -

- Virtual School – Councillors C. Vines and Watson;
- Visiting childrens' homes – Councillors Ahmed and Hoddinott;
- Quality Assurance – Councillor Ahmed.

Further discussion was required to provide a terms of reference for the Quality Assurance role, including how to avoid duplicating any existing functions.

Michelle Whiting had been tasked with **reviewing officer attendance at CPP meetings** to ensure that the structure was streamlined and allowed for Elected Member question and challenge.

Goodbye and best wishes were passed on to Jane Parfremment, Assistant Director Safeguarding, who was shortly due to leave her post to take up a promoted post at Derby County Council (CHECK), and to Maryann Barton who had left her post as Head of the Leaving Care Service. The Corporate Parenting Panel's thanks and best wishes for the future were extended to each.

Resolved: - That the communications updates be noted.

D32. PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AS AT THE 30TH NOVEMBER, 2015.

Consideration was given to the report that showed performance relating to corporate parenting matters to the end of November, 2015.

- There were 418 looked after children;
- The number of children placed in out of the Borough independent placements was high and the strategy to reduce use was multi-faceted;
- An adoption recruitment campaign was to commence as there was a shortage of adopters for all age-ranges, including babies;
- 97.9% of looked after children had an up-to-date Plan;
- 94.9% of those children preparing to leave care had a pathway Plan;
- 75.1% of looked after children have had a stable placement for more than two years;
- 10.5% of looked after children had had three or more moves;
- 88.1% of children had had a review in timescale;
- 95.4% had been visited by their social worker in line with national minimum standards (83.6% within Rotherham's local standards);

- During the 8 months to the end of November, 2015, 26 children had been adopted, 20 within 12 months of their 'should be placed for adoption' decision = 76.9%;
- 91.7% of eligible looked after children had an up-to-date Personal Education Plan.

To the end of November, 2015, Rotherham had 6 Red rated indicators: -

- LAC cases reviewed within timescales;
- Percentage of children adopted (year to date);
- Percentage of LAC visits completed within timescale (Rotherham standard);
- Percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training;
- Percentage of adoptions completed within twelve months of the 'should be placed for adoption' decision (year to date);
- Average number of days between a placement order and being matched with an adoptive family (rolling 12 months/ year to date).

The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel raised questions about the performance relating to looked after children to 30th November, 2015.

The following questions were asked: -

- Councillor Currie asked about placement performance, connected persons, staying put and the percentage of children adopted.
- Councillor Ahmed asked about the health and emotional wellbeing indicators and how these related to drugs/alcohol services. What role did LAC Nurses play? – It was confirmed that looked after children did have a named nurse provided by the CCG. The Named Nurse was a Senior Practitioner, who was supported by an admin team. School nurses also undertook health assessments of LAC. The Service had a designated doctor who quality assured assessments. There was a Family Nurse Partnership and a nurse was based in the Youth Offending Team. Two Mental Health workers were based in the Virtual School; the Primary School Representative had used the service on two occasions and could confirm that the Service had been good.
- Councillor Hamilton asked about the visiting schedule for looked after children placed away from the Borough, and especially those at some distance. - Jane Parefremment explained that the expectations around social worker contact for children placed out of the Borough were the same as for local children. A Social Worker visit was expected within the first week and then every four weeks, unless the child was in a long-term placement, when they would be visited at least once every twelve weeks. Rotherham's expectations were significantly higher than the national. This expectation was one of the reasons why social work caseloads

were being closely monitored to ensure that social workers were not spread too thinly by excessive travel.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel take the health of looked after children as its theme/focus.

D33. COMPLAINTS AND CUSTOMER CONTACTS MADE BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES DIRECTORATE BETWEEN 1ST DECEMBER, 2014, AND 30TH NOVEMBER, 2015.

Consideration was given to the report that outlined Complaints Received by the Children and Young People's Services Directorate between 1st December, 2014 – 30th November, 2015.

The CYPS Improvement Board had as their Action Plan to ensure that the voices and experiences of the most vulnerable children were routinely heard at all levels within the local authority (point 27) and that they informed strategic planning and commissioning (24).

In the timeframe under consideration: -

- 17 complains had been received;
- Stage One complaints – 16;
- Stage Two complaints – 1;
- No complaints had progressed to Stage Three;
- Four complaints were still ongoing and 13 had been closed;
- Three informal enquiries had been received.

The report submitted details of the 17 complaints and three informal enquiries. In the main they related to the attitude/conduct/actions of staff in children's homes or other types of accommodation, social workers not listening or doing what they said they were going to do or complaints about other young people they lived with/their actions.

Of the closed complaints, ten were upheld or partially upheld. Two complaints had been withdrawn due to the issues already being resolved. One complaint was not upheld.

Councillor Watson was pleased to see that the majority of complaints had been resolved at Stage One and that none had progressed to Stage Three.

Councillor Ahmed felt that the number of complaints were high and asked for assurances that they were being dealt with and lessons learned. Sue Wilson confirmed that learning was always taken from the complaints and that they were analysed for themes/patterns.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

D34. VOICE AND INFLUENCE FOCUSSED REPORTS: -

- **Report One - Development of participation and engagement with Looked After Children and Care Leavers: -**

Five pieces of work that linked to the meeting's voice and influence theme were presented. The embedding of voice and influence themes were seen by the Children and Young People's Services Directorate to be key improvement activities. It was felt that there was an opportunity to join-up the work streams, services and projects.

It was proposed that a working group be established to develop a more co-ordinated approach to engagement and participation and to build a deeper understanding of the lived experience of children in care. It was envisaged that the working group would report back to the Corporate Parenting Panel on the progress of their activities.

Intended outcomes: -

1. That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the range of engagement work undertaken to provide voice and influence for Looked After Children.
 2. That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the opportunity to align and join up these work streams, services and projects.
 3. That the Corporate Parenting Panel support the establishment of a working group to develop a more co-ordinated approach to engagement and participation, and to build a deeper understanding of the lived experience of children in our care.
 4. That the Corporate Parenting Panel endorse a proposal that the above working group focus specifically on demonstrable impact and outcomes from participation activity, and the most effective approaches to engaging looked after children in meaningful ways.
 5. That the Corporate Parenting Panel endorse a recommendation that the above group examine how the range of services and projects can be reviewed and redesigned to ensure maximisation of capacity, and the embedding of meaningful engagement of looked after children in the people and services that support them.
- **Report Two - Looked After and Leaving Care Young People's Feedback Report as at October, 2015: -**

The report was collated annually based on the voices of Rotherham's looked after and leaving care young people about their perceptions of living in care and being care leavers. Recommendations from young

people were included to help to inform future service planning and improvements.

Rotherham's Early Help Service operated a Looked After Children's Council (LACC) for children and young people aged 11 – 18 years. This provided a peer support group for young people living in care and care leavers. The LACC was listened to and its recommendations acted upon as a way of providing meaningful improvements, understanding young people's needs and provide better services that meet their needs.

Continued financial investment in the LACC was required in the next financial year to ensure that it could provide young-person friendly activities and engagement opportunities.

The 2015 outcomes of the Voice and Influence Report were shown. 69 young people had participated: -

- 64% of respondents felt that they were **always treated the same** as other young people who were not in care;
- 36% of respondents felt that they were **not always treated the same** as other young people who were not in care;
- 30% of LAC felt that they were **not the same value** as their peers because of their looked after status;
- 70% of LAC felt that they **were the same value** as their peers because of their looked after status;
- 55% of respondents voiced suggestions to improve the quality of experiences for LAC young people;
- 51% of LAC young people had more to tell the LACC.

In addition to the percentage responses, the submitted report included comments from the respondents.

There were four recommendations following the outcomes of the survey: -

- 1 & 2) LAC Equality supports trusting relationships = greater protection;
- 3) Greater social interaction with voice and influence youth groups;
- 4) LAC voices empowered to negotiate their contact with family.

Intended outcomes: -

- That Corporate Parenting Panel note the contents of the report
- That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the key role that the Looked After Children's Council play in having a voice and giving voice to other most vulnerable children and young people.
- That the Corporate Parenting Panel members promote the role of the Looked After Children's Council in their everyday work in the borough and 'champion' the LAC Council as a positive example of LAC Voice & Influence.
- That Corporate Parenting Panel note the recommendations of the

report entitled Development of participation and engagement with Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

- **Report Three – Rotherham Looked After Children’s Council LAC Summit Report – October, 2015: -**

The LAC Summit event that took place on Wednesday 9th September, 2015, was outlined and feedback was provided. This event had led to nine promises: -

1. We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm.
2. We will listen to what you have to say and make sure it makes a difference.
3. We will help you to learn and do your best at school and college.
4. We will help you to be happy and healthy.
5. We will help you to learn new skills as you grow up and become an adult.
6. We will fully involve you in plans and decisions about you and your future.
7. We will help you take part in activities that you enjoy or that you are interested in.
8. We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work.
9. We will help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs.

Intended outcomes: -

- That the Corporate Parenting Panel support the desire to hold a LAC summit every year;
- That the young inspectors test out whether the Local Authority are meeting those promises;
- That the young inspectors report back to next year’s summit.

Following presentation of the LAC Promise, a verbal update was provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work of the Virtual School. The new electronic PEP system was actively seeking and recording looked after children and young people’s voice. Lorraine Dale was encouraging all stakeholders to engage with the system.

Councillor Watson asked what was done to ensure that all education staff had read and taken on board a looked after child’s PEP? Lorraine explained how the improved quality of PEPs was enabling them to be seen as more relevant and useful. Whole school training was taking place on the issue, from headteacher, to senior leadership team, designated teachers, learning mentors and governors.

Councillor Currie asked about the support to governors. He was a LAC Governor and had been surprised by his governor colleague’s lack of knowledge of the priority of LAC. Lorraine was scheduled to provide LAC

training to governors in March, 2016.

Councillor Hamilton asked whether there were any differences in outcomes for primary and secondary-aged looked after children? Lorraine explained that it fluctuated yearly in Rotherham. Jane Parfremment explained the national studies that had been published on LAC's educational outcomes. Overall, they showed that being in care did not always/often close the gap with non-LAC peers. Often the educational outcomes of LAC were better when compared to the educational outcomes for children and families who lived on the edge of care.

It was suggested that a future Corporate Parenting Panel meeting focus on the educational outcomes of looked after children.

- **Report Four - Rotherham's Right 2 Rights Service as of 19th January, 2016: -**

Rotherham's Right 2 Rights Service had recently been inspected by Ofsted and had undergone developments. The Service provided services for children and young people who were looked after by the local authority. It also worked with children and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities who accessed the Orchard Centre.

The Service had increased its staffing levels in order to address the difficulties faced by the Service. Additional capacity intended to increase the focused and timely response to the young people so they know their rights and they have their voices heard by a Rights, Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service. This service was offered to all of Rotherham's looked after children, placed both in and outside of the Borough.

The 2014 Ofsted inspection noted that children liked the independent visitors and advocacy services.

The report noted the functions of the Service: -

- Rights;
- Information and advice;
- Rother-Link Service for children and young people living in out-of-authority placements;
- Visits to all children and young people over the age of five years;
- Children's Group;
- Disability Group;
- Advocacy;
- Advocacy referrals and allocations – there were 55 current advocacy cases and no cases awaiting allocation;
- Business support;
- Independent Visitor Service;

- There were 16 fully trained volunteers – 10 were allocated to a looked after child and 4 were in the marching process. Two volunteers were on hold;
- Involvement of children and young people;
- Referrals for LAC placed in out-of-authority placements;
- Contributing to strategic improvements relating to the voice of the child.

Intended outcomes: -

- That Corporate Parenting Panel note the contents of the report.
- That Corporate Parenting Panel note the key role that the Right 2 Rights Service currently play in supporting looked after children and young people and in ensuring that their wishes and feelings are acknowledged, recorded and appropriately acted upon.
- That Corporate Parenting Panel note the recommendations of the report entitled Development of participation and engagement with Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

• **Report Five: - R U Listening? DVD: -**

The DVD created by the members of the LACC was played. The DVD showed images of Rotherham looked after children and young people showing written cards/placards of the things they wanted and expected in life. The images were accompanied by a vocal track recorded by a Rotherham looked after young person. The DVD was a very emotional but well-produced and professional resource. Alongside it a photo-book had been produced that showed still images from the DVD.

D35. DISCUSSION ON THE PREVIOUS ITEM FOCUSING ON HOW VOICE AND INFLUENCE WORK IS DONE IN THE COUNCIL.

The Elected Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel discussed how they could contribute to ensuring that looked after children and young people's voice and influence was as strong as it could be.

There was support for the working/steering group meeting to provide overarching guidance and oversight.

- Performance measures;
- Best use of technology to gather children and young people's views;
- Use of young inspectors;
- Embed at every level of the children's workforce, including school governors;
- Early intervention and support to families.

The Elected Members in attendance spoke about the improvements and support that could be provided through the democratic processes. This

included the emerging role for pre-scrutiny, and the current role of the Improving Lives Select Commission in looking at the role and importance of voice and influence measures. It was felt that all councillors should be included in these processes, to enable them to ask questions and scrutinise developing policies.

It was requested that the Corporate Parenting Panel's thanks and appreciation be passed on to the LACC members for the work they had carried out and the representation they provided for their looked after peers.

Agreed: - (1) That the wide-range of information provided on the current role of voice and influence work within Rotherham be noted.

(2) That a working group be established to provide oversight on voice and influence and to ensure that it is embedded in every layer of the health, social care and education children's workforce, including ensuring that all professionals abide by the nine LAC Promises.

(3) That the Corporate Parenting Panel receive feedback on the progress of the voice and influence working group at future meetings.

D36. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETINGS: -

Agreed: - That the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel take place on Tuesday 22nd March, 2016, to start at 5.00 pm in the Rotherham Town Hall.

D37. WORK PROGRAMME 2015-2016: -

March, 2016

- IRO annual report
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers
- Children placed out of Borough – update

July, 2016

- LAACT annual report

A future focus meeting on: -

- Looked After Children and Young People educational outcomes.